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AM I
A CHRISTIAN?



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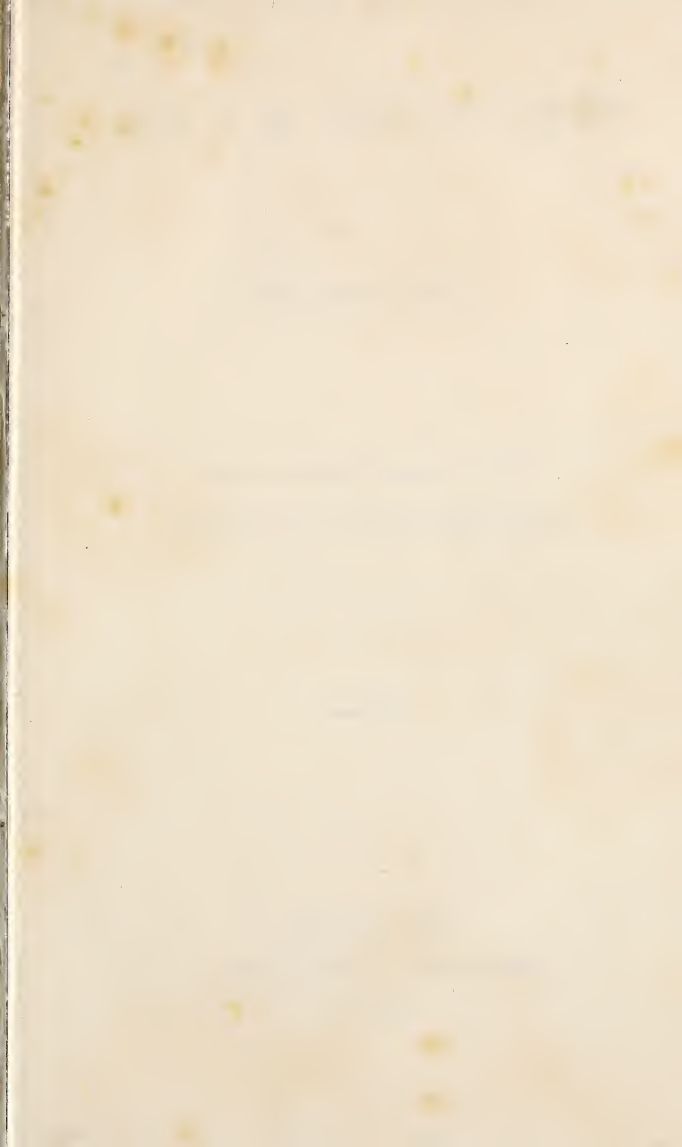
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AM I A CHRISTIAN?

BY JAMES LORING.

"

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE ?....Paul.

TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY....Isaiah.



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Bertram Smith
March 15, 1934

P R E F A C E .

IT appears to be the settled conviction of men of the best judgment and most conscientious discernment, that there are no subjects on which we are so much inclined to make mistakes, as that of the nature of true religion, and our own moral character in the sight of God. It is revolting to the native pride of our hearts to be placed in the lowly state of sin and misery, in which the Gospel finds us, wholly dependent upon the mercy of God in Christ. We rise in hostility against the just denunciations of wrath against our guilt, and vainly imagine that we can merit God's favor by our repentance and good works. In opposition to this deceptive view of our own character, divine revelation faithfully counsels us to beware. Jesus assures us, that false teach-

ers will arise, publishing erroneous views of religion, and that Satan, our grand adversary, will assist their machinations to deceive and ruin our souls. In addition to these dangers, our own depravity will incline us to disobey and despise the gospel.

The parables of Jesus in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, give a fearful account of the manner in which men turn away their ears from the truth, and are led away by the different temptations which assail them. The way-side hearer attends to the proclamation of the gospel, but does not understand it, and Satan catcheth away the word that was sown in his heart. The word is received by others as in stony places, but having no root in the affections, such persons endure for a season and in time of temptation fall away. A third class is represented as receiving the word, as seed sown among thorns. In these persons the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and they become unfruitful. There is, however, a happy number, decidedly distinct from those heretofore

named, who receive the word into good and honest hearts, and bring forth fruit in different degrees unto eternal life.

The account here given is that of inspiration, and it presents a melancholy picture of human depravity. Of four different kinds of hearers of the proclamation of pardon to the penitent, there is but one that receives the truth in the love of it. We see then, how precious are those seasons of grace in which God appears by His Holy Spirit to arrest sinners in their course to ruin, and to turn them from sin to holiness. The way in which he does this, is to convince them of the state of their hearts as exceedingly sinful, and incline them to seek salvation through the mediation of the Son of God. To give an idea of the opinion of Christian ministers on this subject a century since, we present an extract from Prince's Christian History, son of the Rev. Mr. Prince, forty years minister of the Old South Church in this city. We find it copied in Gillies' History of the Success of the Gospel. It relates to the

remarkable revival which took place in Boston about the year 1740, and was written by the Rev. Thomas Prince. The style of the passage, although quaint and diffuse, is forcible and impressive.

“ On Friday night, July 30, 1742, at the lecture in the South Church, near nine of the clock, being very dark, there came on a very terrible storm of thunder and lightening: and just as the blessing was given, an amazing clap broke over the church with piercing repetitions, which set many a shrieking, and the whole assembly into great consternation: and yet in these displays of the Majesty of God, and terrifying apprehensions of danger of sudden destruction, neither in this surprizing night, nor in all the course of thirty years, have I scarce known any, by these kinds of terrors, brought under genuine convictions. So, on the Lord's-day, June 3d last, in our time of public worship in the forenoon, when we had been about a quarter of an hour in prayer, the mighty power of God came on with a surprising roar and earthquake; which made the house with all the galleries to rock and tremble, with such a grating noise, as if the bricks were moving out of their places to come down and bury us; which exceedingly disturbed the congregation, excited the shrieks of many, put many on flying out, and the generality in motion. But though many were greatly terrified, yet in a day or two their terrors seemed to vanish, and I know of but two or three seized by convictions on this awful occasion.

“No ! conviction is quite another sort of a thing. It is the work of the Spirit of God, a sovereign, free and almighty agent ; wherein he gives the sinful soul such a clear and lively view of the glory of the divine sovereignty, omnipresence, holiness, justice, truth and power ; the extensiveness, spirituality and strictness of his law, the binding nature, efficacy and dreadful-ness of his curses ; the multitude and heinousness of its sins both of commission and omission ; the horrible vileness, wickedness, perverseness and hypocrisy of the heart, with its utter impotence either rightly to repent, or believe in Christ, or change itself : so that it sees itself in a lost, undone and perishing state, without the least degree of worthiness to recommend it to the holy and righteous God, and the least degree of strength to help itself out of this condition. These discoveries are made by means of some revealed truths, either in the reading, hearing or remembrance : when in the hearing, sometimes by words of terror, and sometimes by words of tenderness : and the Holy Spirit with such internal evidence and power, so applies them to the conscience, that they become as sharp arrows piercing into the heart, wounding, paining and sticking in it, when all the mechanical impressions of frightful sounds are over, sometimes for many days, weeks and months, if not years together, until this Divine Agent, by these and other convictions agreeably to his inspired word, entirely subdues the soul to Christ, or being ungratefully treated, withdraws his convincing influence, and leaves the heart and conscience to

greater and more dangerous hardness and stupidity than ever.

“ Such were the convictions wrought in many hundreds in this town by Mr. Tennent’s searching ministry : and such was the case of many scores of several other congregations as well as mine, who came to me and others for direction under them. And indeed by all their converse I found, it was not so much the terror as the searching nature of his ministry, that was the principal means of their conviction. It was not merely, nor so much his laying open the terrors of the law, and wrath of God, or damnation of hell ; (for this they could pretty well bear, as long as they hoped these belonged not to them, or they could easily avoid them;) as his laying open their many vain and secret shifts and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes, their utter impotence, and impending danger of destruction ; whereby they found all their hopes and refuges of lies to fail them, and themselves exposed to eternal ruin, unable to help themselves, and in a lost condition. This searching preaching was both the suitable and principal means of their conviction : though ’tis most evident, the most proper means are utterly insufficient ; and wholly depend on the sovereign will of God, to put forth his power, and apply them by this or that instrument, on this or that person, at this or that season, in this or that way or manner ; with these or those permitted circumstances, infirmities, corruptions, errors, agencies, oppositions ; and to what degree, duration and event he pleases.

“ A remarkable instance of conviction also has been sometimes under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Edwards of Northampton : a preacher of a low and moderate voice, a natural way of delivery, and without any agitation of body, or any thing else in the manner to excite attention, except his habitual and great solemnity, looking and speaking as in the presence of God, and with a weighty sense of the matter delivered. It is just as the Holy Spirit pleases, who hides occasions of pride from man : and if Mr. Tennent was to come here again, and preach more rouzingly than ever, it may be, not one soul would come under conviction by him.”

The object of the author of the following pages, is to present some of the distinguishing characteristics of the work of grace on the heart. For this purpose he has made frequent allusions to the Scriptures, believing their testimony to be divine and conclusive on the great subjects brought to view. If the effort should assist any sincere inquirer as to his own moral character, it will be a peculiar gratification to the author.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
Chap. 1. HOLY LOVE TO GOD, ...	9
“ 2. POWER OF FAITH, ...	16
“ 3. AUTHORITY OF CHRIST TO PARDON SINNERS, ...	28
“ 4. TRAITS OF MORAL CHARACTER,	33
“ 5. DANGER OF UNBELIEF, . . .	37
“ 6. RELIGIOUS CHEERFULNESS, . .	42
“ 7. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST, ...	48
“ 8. THE ENERGY OF THE HOLY GHOST, ...	56
“ 9. NO RELIGION WITHOUT LOVE,	69
“ 10. THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE, ...	77
“ 11. THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT, ...	85
“ 12. THE LATTER DAY GLORY OF THE CHURCH, ...	92
“ 13. THE CROWNING EVIDENCE OF SALVATION, ...	99
“ 14. THE BELIEVER'S PROSPECT IN DEATH, ...	107
“ 15. THE CHRISTIAN IN HEAVEN,	116

AM I A CHRISTIAN?

CHAPTER I.

HOLY LOVE TO GOD.

I. John iv. 18.

**THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE ; BUT PERFECT LOVE
CASTETH OUT FEAR.**

It is pleasing to observe, that the statements respecting vital godliness which are recorded in Scripture, delightfully harmonize with the feelings of the regenerate heart. In the passage on which we propose to comment, we are assured of a heart cheering truth, that perfect or holy love casteth out slavish fear. What Christian is there, who has ever felt the love of God shed abroad in his heart, who does not know this fact ? This love

unites the heart to God and truth. The holy character of God and the purity of all revealed truth which bears his moral image, are to the new born soul delightful objects of contemplation. The transformation which is effected in regeneration, brings the individual into such a nearness to God, as utterly to banish for a season every fearful apprehension. The clear discovery of the divine perfections, as they are manifested in the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the medium of communication of forgiveness to the sinner, fills the soul with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, becoming a happy foretaste of endless blessedness in Heaven. It was a special petition in the last prayer of Jesus Christ, that the disciples whom his father had given him might be with him in the eternal world, to behold his glory, that glory which the Father had given him before the world began. What more delightful apprehension of the blessedness of Heaven can be

possibly entertained, than to behold and love with ineffable joy the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures give us the most beautiful representations of true religion by assuring us that it is love. That believer, therefore, who desires to be the happiest Christian on earth, must cherish this affection with the greatest diligence. There are many serious persons, who, it is hoped, are truly pious, who seem to enjoy but a small portion of this comfort of love. This may be owing to their neglect of watchfulness and their inattention to the spirit of prayer; or it may be in consequence of indistinct views of the gospel of Christ. It is greatly important in the cultivation of holy love to God and truth, that we enter deeply into the clearest apprehensions of His love in the gift of his Son. Such views are essential to the enjoyment of that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

The number of believers is by no means small, who express a strong desire to enjoy a full and constant assurance of the love of God to their souls. The truth that there is no fear in love, and the habitual exercise of this delightful temper of mind towards God, is the certain way to attain this assurance. The most happy saints on earth are those, who have been most deeply rooted in holy love. When Moses expressed his intense love to God, it was made in this brief supplication, "I beseech thee, to show me thy glory." When Enoch manifested a similar feeling of heart, it was by walking with God in holy communion. When David gives utterance to his heart in love to God, it is in this language "My soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

What a beautiful illustration of holy love have we in the conduct of that Mary, who followed Jesus into the house of Simon the pharisee, which he had entered to sit at meat. She brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee began to question in his own mind, whether he had not mistaken the character of Jesus, and said within himself, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him ; for she is a sinner. Jesus knowing his thoughts, said to him, "Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but this woman, since the time I

came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Perhaps we have no brighter example in the New Testament, of the intermingling of holy love with penitence, and faith, and humility, than is to be seen in this woman.

The love of which we speak is as clear an exhibition of the beauty of holiness, as can be found in Revelation. It is the peculiar trait which the Scripture ascribes to God himself, when it declares that God is love. This love has no affinity with moral evil. Holiness and sin are perfectly opposite in their nature, as saith the Scripture, " The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other."

The excellent John Newton has remarked

on the passage, "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself," that to enjoy the felicity of this witness, it is necessary to have the truths of the gospel revealed in our hearts. This brings an experimental conviction on which we may depend, that we have received the grace of God in truth. There is such a sympathy between the written word and the gracious exercises of the renewed soul, as to overpower the unholy principle of unbelief. The moral character of God is so delightful to the contemplation of the new man, as to illustrate the truth of Scripture, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Believers in Jesus, make it your daily business to cultivate in your hearts this holy sympathy with the truths of God. It will give you the most satisfactory evidence of your title to eternal blessedness.

CHAPTER II.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

Mark xi. 22.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD.

THE more we examine the volume of inspiration, the more clearly do we see the necessity of doing so with holy supplication and with believing views, that the truths communicated are a revelation from heaven. This is the only book from which we can obtain a correct knowledge of the character of God, of our relations to him, of our accountability, and of that invisible world which we are soon to enter. Here we are taught the immortality of the soul, the certain rewards of the righteous, and the miseries which await the wick-

ed. The character of the friends of God is drawn with great simplicity, and in a manner which cannot be misunderstood by any one who is willing to believe what God has revealed, and to believe it simply on his testimony. The distinguishing marks of an enemy of God are also delineated with great clearness, and the certainty of their punishment is also distinctly stated, unless they repent and forsake iniquity.

The words on which we now comment were spoken by Him, who spake as never man spake. His words, "Have faith in God," imply the force of a positive command. They are founded in the fact of man's accountability, and the natural powers which are given him to do his duty. The faith here commanded is indispensable in the discharge of every moral obligation. How can any duty be performed as it ought to be done, unless we believe in God, and have a realizing ap-

prehension of his presence and inspection? If we attempt to pray, we cannot do so aright, unless we believe in the omnipresence of the invisible God, and that he hears our supplication. In our request at the throne of grace, we must have a clear perception of our absolute dependence upon Him, and of his ability to do the things which we ask of him. Was it not so with the good old patriarch Jacob, when he was about to meet his brother Esau? He well knew the spirit of revenge which had long lurked in the bosom of Esau, and he was now afraid that this was the time in which his brother would be avenged. What did he do? He did not say that he would flee from the approach of Esau, or that he would summon the strength of all his attendants to encounter the strength of Esau, with his 400 men. No, he has better strength than this. He thinks of God Almighty, and betakes himself to prayer. He tells the Lord his fears, and that

he apprehends his brother will destroy him and his family. Hear Jacob's prayer—"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return into thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." After this, Jacob prepares to meet his brother by a peaceful arrangement, and with a valuable present to pacify his dreaded resentment, of which we have an account in the 32d of Genesis. Before his meeting Esau, we have an account of an interview which he had with a man, of whom he said, "I have seen God face to face,

and my life is preserved.” The man with whom he wrestled in the night, is supposed to have been Jesus Christ, who had assumed a bodily form. When he desired to depart because the day began to break, Jacob said, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Here we see a noble example of the exercise of faith. The prayer of faith has power with God, and is the happy medium of bringing down from heaven the blessings of grace to guilty men. But alas! what unbelief is there in the hearts of those, who are called the children of the Most High! How feeble are their supplications when compared with the confidence of him, who was henceforth to be called Israel, a prince who had power with God.

The instances in the New Testament are many, in which our Lord gave the highest testimony to the excellence of faith in his power and grace. When the Syro-Phenician woman besought him to heal the malady with which she was afflicted, and he, knowing that she was a Gentile, said to her "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," the woman determined to urge her plea to the last, and submissively acknowledging what he said to be just, urged her request with a new argument, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table : " Jesus, as if overcome with her deep submission, gave her this memorable eulogy, " O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." On another occasion when a Roman centurion besought him to heal his servant, and the Lord told him that he would come and heal him, the centurion answered, " Lord, I am not worthy that thou

shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

With what condescending kindness did the Saviour give testimony to his faith in this reply, in the presence of all around him, "Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," and he said unto the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it unto thee," and his servant was healed in the self-same hour. The impotent man who was healed at the pool Bethesda, is an instance of faith in the power of Christ which he approved by immediately healing him. If the man had said, I am helpless and cannot take up my bed as thou hast commanded, and thus refused to obey the Lord, he would not have received the blessing which he had desired; but he, with the obedience of faith took up his bed and walked. So also was it with the man who had the withered hand. On the Sabbath-day, when the Jews were assembled in

the presence of the man with a withered hand, our Saviour, to show the power of faith and his authority to work a miracle in their sight, said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out thy hand." With an obedient will he did so, and his hand was restored whole as the other. Another example is found in the case of a blind man, who besought the Lord to restore to him his sight, the man having been blind from his birth. Having anointed the eyes of the man with clay, Jesus said to him, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash." Why did not Jesus immediately restore the man's sight, without commanding him to go to the pool and wash? He could have restored his sight by a word, if it had been his pleasure to do so, but he chose that the man should have an evidence of his own faith by doing as he had commanded. The man went and washed, and returned seeing. Thus was his faith approved, and he had the witness of it in

himself. Other bright discoveries of the preciousness of faith are made in the conduct of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Samuel and Daniel.

Why is it, brethren, that in the Scriptures so much stress is laid on faith? We reply, for this simple reason, that without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith lays hold on the strength of Jehovah! He says to feeble man, "Take hold of my strength, and thou shalt make peace with me." It is this grace which disposes us to lie at the feet of the Redeemer, depending for pardon and justification by the merits of his atonement. There is no other medium by which we can approach the throne of the Eternal, but by him who is made our sacrifice. This faith explains to us what is meant by the ladder, which Jacob saw in a vision, the foot of which stood on the earth, its top reaching to heaven, and on which the angels of heaven ascended and descended. If

we desire a holy intercourse with God in glory, it must be made through Him in whom it pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell.

Ye, who have an interest at the throne of grace, ye, who believe in the power of the prayer of faith, and in the necessity of the energy of the Holy Ghost to awaken the conscience and regenerate the hearts of sinners, be frequent in earnest supplication, that showers of grace may descend in copious measure, that revivals of religion may continue to increase, till the whole earth shall become as the paradise of God in glory. While you reflect that you are but feeble and dependent creatures, do not forget that the Lord offers to you through the prayer of faith, the energy of the Holy Spirit, by whose influence you may make rapid progress in the path of duty, glorifying Him in your body and in your spirit which are his. In extolling the excellence of

faith, it has not been our intention to depreciate any other grace. The great Andrew Fuller has well remarked that "grace is like chained shot, when one enters it makes room for the entrance of all." Thus is it in regeneration ; when the proud will is subdued and one grace enters the heart, all the others follow in the train. Paul thus names the fruits of the Spirit ; " Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." How happy that Christian whose heart is under the full influence of holy faith. Such a Christian may exult in the language of Watts :

" God is mine all-sufficient good,
My portion and my choice,
In him my vast desires are filled,
And all my powers rejoice."

Fellow-mortals, unbelievers, ye who live carelessly, neglecting God and religion, awake from your stupor, lest suddenly ye drop into

hell. Hear ye the counsel of the apostle James ; “ Be afflicted, and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness.” Repent without delay, lest ye die in your sins.

CHAPTER III.

AUTHORITY OF CHRIST TO PARDON SINNERS.

Mark ii. 10.

THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT THE SON OF MAN
HATH POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS.

ON a certain occasion the friends of a man who was taken with a palsy, presented him before Jesus for healing. He perceived their faith and said to the man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Jews who were present were offended, that Jesus should dare to assume this power. To convince them that he had this authority, he wrought a miracle, and said to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thy house." The man did so, to the astonishment of the

Jews. The inference is plain, that if Jesus in his state of humiliation on earth had power to forgive sins, he can now exercise the same high prerogative in his glorious exaltation in Heaven. Paul in exhorting his Colossian brethren to the duty of mutual forgiveness, uses these words, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." In another passage this duty is thus enforced, "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." What nobler motive could induce us to the duty of mutual forgiveness, than the example of God and his Son?

The way in which pardon is communicated to the sinner, is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The exhortation in the Gospel is, repent, that your sins may be forgiven. The faith which we must exercise is illustrated in the case of Abraham, who believed God,

and it was counted unto him for righteousness. This does not mean, that his faith was actually his righteousness, but that it was so accounted by God in consequence of his grace manifested in Jesus Christ. What was it that Abraham believed? God had promised to him, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham believed this promise, and thus exercised faith in the Messiah who was to come. Jesus therefore said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." It was in consequence of his faith, thus taking hold of Christ and his righteousness, that it is said that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Now the difference between faith and works is thus illustrated by Paul to the Romans; "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungod-

ly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Thus we see, how it is, that in consequence of union with Jesus Christ, a sinner may be justified without the deeds of the law. Watts, in view of this delightful doctrine thus exclaims,

" Jesus ! how glorious is thy grace !
When in thy name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness,
Which makes the sinner just."

Clear views of this truth bring the soul into the light and liberty of the Gospel, and by it we have communion with God and fellowship with Jesus Christ, having redemption through his blood according to the riches of his love.

Believers in Jesus Christ, ye who know your interest in his salvation, bow your hearts in deep humility in the study of that revelation, which brings to you this testimonial of the love of God to your souls. Cherish in your hearts that holy gratitude, which will

incline you to keep his commandments, and by constant and persevering obedience to abide in his love. Remember the words of Jesus, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

CHAPTER IV.

TRAITS OF MORAL CHARACTER.

Malachi iii. 18.

THEN SHALL YE DISCERN BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED, BETWEEN HIM WHO SERVETH GOD AND HIM WHO SERVETH HIM NOT.

THE text is a prophecy of what shall take place in a season of Revival. There is at such a time a manifest difference discerned in the moral character of men. Persons of different opinions arrange themselves in distinct ranks. In the view of some persons of timid moral feeling, this seems to be a fearful omen. They dread the excitement and the opposition which will occur. They imagine it to be the

destruction of good society, and hazardous to the cause of religion ; but such persons need not be apprehensive of fearful consequences. It is a circumstance highly favorable to genuine piety, when men take sides. Those who have no religion learn what is their true character, and they find themselves without the limits of vital Christianity. They had heretofore been wholly unacquainted with themselves, having no proper conviction of the feelings of their own hearts in reference to a preparation for eternity. Perhaps they had been accustomed to hear the preaching of a man, who had taught them to depend on an externally fair moral character, and who had never told them of the necessity of regeneration, and the indispensable importance of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. In a revival of true religion, these persons observe their friends and acquaintance to become the subject of a series of exercises of mind and heart, which is to them

surprising. Their opposition and sometimes their wrath are excited against their nearest friends, and especially will their anger be greatly enkindled against the preacher, who tells them of the danger of impenitence and unbelief. But is it not a happy circumstance, that persons should know, what is their moral character in reference to another state of existence? Shall we spend this life in amassing wealth, in music and dancing and laughter and merriment, and never sit down seriously to consider, whether such a course will prepare us for blessedness in heaven?

We are accustomed to believe, that we are destined to a state of immortality beyond the tomb. The man who should tell us that death is the end of our existence, would be viewed as a monster in human shape. But have we duly considered, what will be the state of society in the future world? Men appear to die with the same moral character, which they

sustained in this world ; but how different is the temper of their minds ! Do we promiscuously meet those with whose feelings and pursuits we can cordially sympathize, and with whom we should be willing to live in a state of endless intimacy ? The great question therefore, ought to be decided, what will be our condition in the future world ? The enemies of God, the supercilious and the proud, cannot enter heaven, where all is delight in God and submission to his will.

CHAPTER V.

DANGER OF UNBELIEF.

Acts xiii. 40, 41.

BEWARE, LEST THAT COME UPON YOU, WHICH IS SPOKEN OF IN THE PROPHETS ; BEHOLD, YE DESPISERS, AND WONDER, AND PERISH : FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YE SHALL IN NO WISE BELIEVE, THOUGH A MAN DECLARE IT UNTO YOU.

WERE it not for the ancient records in the holy Scriptures, the aversion to religion which is discoverable in the present day would appear more like a new thing. This opposition began at the fall of man, and was apparent in the spirit of Satan, who envied the happiness which he saw in the garden of Eden. This

spirit soon discovered itself in the conduct of Cain, who hated his brother Abel, and slew him. And wherefore slew he him? The Scripture informs us. "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." The same enmity of the natural heart is always more rampant in revivals of genuine religion, and is not therefore to be wondered at in our own times.

Those who assert, that revivals of religion are the work of mere excitement of the passions of credulous women, and children, and men of nervous temperament, understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Had they examined the New Testament with a candid mind, they would have seen that the apostle Paul, himself a monument of the grace of God, a man of a firm and logical mind, was a decided and zealous preacher of the gospel.

The text is a part of the sermon, which

Paul preached at Antioch to a synagogue of Jews. He warned them to beware of that unbelief, the cherishing of which would be visited by the divine displeasure. Some of the Jews believed from his discourses to them afterwards, but the great majority of them rejected his testimony. Many of the Gentiles believed, and attended his ministry with gladness. This revival of religion among the Gentiles at Antioch excited the envy of the Jews, and they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, who was with him, and expelled them from their coasts.

Whoever will examine the New Testament with an impartial mind, will discover plenary evidence, that revivals of religion have always been produced by the energy and grace of the Holy Spirit. It was the promise of our Saviour in his last discourse to his disciples previous to his death, that he would send them another Comforter, the Holy Ghost, who

should convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Of sin, said he, because they believe not on me. Here the great sin of infidelity is placed by Jesus himself in a prominent point of view. As it is the chief cause of all the iniquity committed under the Gospel, it is presented as the guilt, against which the principal labors of his ministers are to be directed. Were it not for this unbelief in the hearts of men, the number of the despisers of religion would be greatly diminished. The Scripture solemnly warns such persons in this language, "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." It is the fearful consequence of a contempt of the Gospel, that the bands of the scorner will be made strong. He will find, as he continues of this temper of mind, that his hardness and impenitence will increase. How kind then is the warning, that we make not the things of God and religion those which we despise, and reject from our

careful attention. Jesus said to his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach his Gospel, “ he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. And into whatsoever city or house ye shall enter, and they receive you not, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.” What an awful citation is here made by Jesus Christ to the day when he shall judge the world, presiding as the judge of the living and the dead. Let those who make the fearful threatenings of the Gospel against the impenitent the subjects of their sport and merriment, carefully examine the New Testament, before they meet in eternity the God against whom they blaspheme.

CHAPTER VI.

RELIGIOUS CHEERFULNESS.

Ephesians v. 18, 19.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT ; SPEAKING TO
YOURSELVES IN PSALMS, AND HYMNS, AND
SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING AND MAKING MEL-
ODY IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD.

PERSONS unacquainted with vital religion frequently object to revivals, because, say they, the persons who at such seasons are the subjects of a work of grace, become melancholy and unsocial. Let us examine this charge. When we consider the carelessness of the multitudes, who are pressing to the grave and eternity, it cannot fail to excite fearful apprehensions respecting their inattention

to religion. Do we not recollect in the vision that Ezekiel saw, during the great degeneracy of Israel, when a fearful slaughter was commanded to be made through the city, that a man clothed with linen was commanded to set a mark on the men, that sighed and cried on account of the abominations, that were committed in the midst of the land, and that every man who had the designated mark on his forehead, should remain unhurt in the calamitous slaughter? Thus has it been in every age till the present time, that the wretched state of the ungodly has deeply affected the hearts of the pious. This must be one apology for their occasional heaviness of heart. There are, however, seasons of joy and gladness among the saints.

The passage selected above is the command of inspiration, that in the social and public worship of Christians, they should rejoice with singing and gladness, making melody in their

hearts unto the Lord. In a delightful season of revival, we have witnessed the cheerful songs of the new converts, who have become the glad children of Zion. The aged and the young have united in obeying the command, "Be glad in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Apprehending the glorious perfections of God, they have deeply felt the obligation of gratitude and praise for the salvation, which he has revealed through the Son of his love. Repeated instances of this holy worship have brought to happy remembrance a pleasing passage in the Canticles, "The winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land." These occasional seasons of holy worship are more enchanting to the gracious heart, than would be the sweetest song of the nightingale,

filling the soul with the recollection of a verse in Watts,

“ My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”

It is difficult to imagine, how it is that persons of understanding, who possess the lovely sympathies of common humanity, can fail to be deeply affected with devotional meetings of this character.

With reference to the charge of melancholy, it must be considered that persons who are newly awakened, and begin to feel their guilt and just condemnation, cannot fail to be uncommonly cast down, till they apprehend the way of safety by faith in Jesus Christ. When this is clearly discovered, they rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; then it is that they rejoice with joy and singing. It is this joy in God which will answer the ques-

tion of Nicodemus, "How can a man be born again when he is old?"

But, alas! the excitement of a revival! Who can bear this? Reader, if you are a man of the world and a man of business, what important action have you ever achieved without excitement? You know the excitement of a good bargain, how has it called up all your feelings, and you know the depression of a bad bargain; and you know that you have voluntarily paid great amounts of money in the aggregate, merely for the purpose of getting excitement. How much has vain company-keeping cost you? How much have theatrical entertainments cost you? And what has all this done for you? Has any of all this nonsense satisfied your soul? Have you obtained that peace of conscience, which will cause you to look on the tomb and an endless eternity with pleasure? Will you content yourselves with any and every vain excite-

ment, while you neglect to seek salvation in Christ Jesus? Dare you make the fearful hazard? Examine seriously before you meet God in eternity, disembodied.

CHAPTER VII.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

Acts xiii. 38, 39.

BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU THEREFORE, MEN AND BRETHREN, THAT THROUGH THIS MAN IS PREACHED UNTO YOU THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS: AND BY HIM ALL THAT BELIEVE ARE JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS, FROM WHICH YE COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF MOSES.

It is the peculiar glory of Revelation, that it makes known a fact hidden from former ages, that there is forgiveness with God, the pardon of sins, according to the riches of his grace. The inventive genius of the wisest men in the heathen world had been intensely exercised to discover a religion, which would give them peace of conscience, and the certain

prospect of happiness after death. The futility of all their reasonings upon the subject was apparent from the fact, that their imaginations created a multiplicity of divinities, some of which they presented in the form of idols, of beasts and reptiles, whom they worshipped with the grossest indecencies. And though the light of nature which they enjoyed, was sufficient to convict them of their folly and wickedness, yet their corrupt propensities inclined them to persevere in their madness, that they might excuse themselves in the commission of the most degrading vices. Thus was it made manifest, that the world by wisdom knew not God. Paul in alluding to this subject, thus triumphantly inquires, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed." His infinite wisdom and grace

were manifested in the gift of his Son, as the Redeemer of lost men. When there was no created power that could extend salvation to our apostate race, God laid our help on his Son, who was mighty to save even to the uttermost, all who come unto him in the name of Jesus. How wonderful the method of redemption, through which God reveals his grace to a guilty world ! Is it reasonable to believe, that it cost no effort in the Divine Mind to give his Son a sacrifice for sin ? Revelation assures us, that God is actuated by the noblest motives and holiest impulses. It is declared by inspiration, that “He is love ;” and this unspeakable love is manifested in the gift of his Son, as a ransom and sacrifice for sinners.

Different opinions have been entertained as to the ground of the sinner’s justification and forgiveness. Some have supposed, that after his regeneration, he is justified on the ground of

his submission to God. Others have imagined, that repentance may be the plea for his forgiveness. Neither of these ideas, however, gives adequate honor to the violated law of God, and the indignity cast upon his moral government. Hence it was rendered necessary that Jesus Christ should assume human nature, and yield an obedience unto death, that the rectitude of God's moral government might be maintained. In consequence of his accomplishment of this work, God can now justify every believing sinner, having promised that this faith shall be accounted for righteousness ; so that in the language of Paul, God can now be just and justify him who believeth in Jesus. How simple and gracious, how honorary to God and how safe for the believer, is this method of salvation !

“ The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through his blood.

It is in consequence of the dignity of Jesus as the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God, that his vindication of the law and moral government of the Father is accepted ; and it is for the same reason, that his sufferings as a Mediator and his obedience unto death are of infinite efficacy, in the free forgiveness and justification of every penitent, believing sinner. With what eloquence and power does inspiration speak, in contrasting the offerings under the legal dispensation with the atonement of Christ. “If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” And again it is said of Jesus, that “when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, from

henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” What a glorious exaltation has Jesus obtained at the right hand of his Father in glory, by the sacrifice of himself for the sins of men. Reader, here draw a contrast with the Man of Nazareth, he who had not where to lay his head, so poor that women ministered to his necessities, so traduced that he was said to have an evil spirit, mocked and despised by the chief priests and rulers among the Jews, arraigned and condemned at the bar of Pilate, and ignominiously crucified on the cross, contrast, we say, with this dishonored Redeemer of sinners, Him who is now enthroned at the right hand of his Father in heaven ; and again pursue the contrast, until you view this Jesus descending in the clouds of heaven in the glory of his Father and the holy angels, to judge the world, and decide the destinies of the millions, whom he will raise from the dead. How glorious does Jesus ap-

pear in his condescension, when we place it in comparison with his infinite dignity as the God of glory, the Creator and Governor of the universe? His Deity appears in these words of inspiration that "he offered himself through the eternal Spirit, and that by himself he purged or put away our sins." Here we see an exertion of power beyond the capacity of a created being. Of what intelligence in heaven or on earth could it be said, that by his own independent agency, or by himself he atoned for sin? In the view of the glory of Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, can we wonder at the rapture which fills the souls of the redeemed in heaven? Well may their song be justified, "Unto Him who loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and honor, dominion and praise forever and ever."

Dr. Young in contemplating this sublime exhibition of Jehovah's mercy, thus rapturously exclaims,

“ And what is this ? survey the wondrous cure,
And at each step let higher wonder rise !
Pardon for infinite offence ! and pardon
Through means that speak its value infinite !
A pardon bought with blood ! with blood divine !
With blood divine of him I made my foe !
Persisted to provoke ! though wooed and awed,
Blest and chastised, a flagrant rebel still ;
A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne !
Nor I alone ! a rebel universe.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENERGY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Romans xv. 19.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

REGENERATION is always effected by the energy and grace of the Holy Ghost ; and as his sovereign influence is often brought to view in the Scriptures, it may be profitable to notice the manner in which his agency operates on the hearts of men. When some important object is about to be accomplished in the church, the Holy Spirit arrests the attention, and stirs up the courage of his friends to engage in the work. When God had determined to deliver his people in Egypt from the cruel bondage of Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron

were employed under divine influence to go in unto the king, and inform him that they must go into the wilderness to do sacrifice unto the God of the Hebrews. The cruel monarch, however, would not listen to their request, until ten plagues were brought upon the guilty land: and when at last he consented to their departure from Egypt, his heart became so hardened that he regretted the liberty which he had given them, and endeavoured to bring them back into slavery, pursuing them with his chariots and army in their passage through the Red Sea. The sea, however, overwhelmed the despot and his minions, and Israel, safe on the distant shore, sang the praises of the God of their deliverance. Numerous other instances are named in the history of the ancient church of God, in which he interposed for the overthrow of his enemies, and the salvation of his friends. What a noble example is presented in the brief notice of the prophet

Elijah. In consequence of the prayer of faith offered by him, and as a judgment inflicted on the wickedness of the people, the heavens were shut three years and six months, so that there was no rain on the land of Israel ; but at the end of these days the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain. When the copious showers descended, the same Spirit came upon him with power, and he girded himself and ran in triumph before the chariot of Ahab. This salvation of Israel was accompanied by the destruction of four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal.

From the beginning of the sacred record of the creation of the world named in Genesis, to the closing of the book of God in Revelation, we notice the operations of the same Spirit. When darkness covered the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and he said, " Let there be light, and

there was light." In Revelation, the gracious invitation of the gospel is thus given, "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

But it is the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men, that we would more particularly consider. It is his power which arrests the attention of careless sinners, to consider the necessity of the pardon of sin. It is his power which enlightens the mind to discover its evil, and the justice of God in its punishment. The same energy opens the understanding and the heart, to apprehend the glory of Jesus Christ and the efficacy of his atonement, inclining the heart to believe in him as the only medium of access to God. None but the happy souls who have exercised this faith, can apprehend the joy with which it fills the believing heart. These persons seem to themselves to have entered a new

world. It is well recorded by Paul, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Some would translate the passage *a new creation*. They have new views of their own hearts, of the odiousness of sin, and of the beauty of holiness. Their views of God and of Christ are entirely new. If they look on the earth in its fragrance, or on the heavens as they roll in their grandeur, in the immensity of the worlds which are seen on a clear evening, in all these they see the majesty and the glory of the God of their salvation. In the fruitful field which the Lord has blessed, in the flowing waters, in the loaded fruit-tree, and in the song of beautiful birds, the new man apprehends new causes of grateful admiration of their glorious Creator. In the language of Pope, he

"Sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind."

The experience of President Edwards is a happy illustration of this thought. In his ac-

count of his exercises after conversion, he thus speaks ;—" Scarcely anything, among all the works of nature, was so delightful to me as thunder and lightning : formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunder-storm arising ; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder-storm, and used to take the opportunity at such times, to fix myself in order to view the clouds and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which often-times was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God."

In addition to all this blessedness, they discover an incomparable excellence, a benignity and a majesty in the Scriptures, which they never before perceived. The illustrations of the character of God, of Jesus Christ and of

the Holy Spirit, afford them inexpressible delight. The richness of the promises, the supports which they are encouraged to expect in the path of duty, and the felicities which are promised them in the heavenly world, sometimes transport their hearts beyond the limits of the visible world. Now, when all this holy pleasure is considered as being communicated by the Spirit of God, and that this Spirit is promised in abundant measure to the humble prayer of faith, how diligently ought we to seek this communion with God, with which his glory is so intimately associated. It is this communion which strengthens the Christian to every duty, making the yoke of Christ easy, and his burden light.

From the strength and grace which the Holy Ghost communicated to the primitive preachers of the gospel, we see the necessity in which the ministers of the same gospel now stand, of a like influence in the discharge of

their peculiar duties. It may be well asked in this connection, how can they preach, except they are sent of God? We have in the present day a large number who call themselves the ministers of Christ; but if, in the Spirit of New Testament charity, we should deduct from this number those who do not preach the gospel with clearness, how comparatively small would be the class of men who give full evidence of their commission from Christ! Where do we see the zeal of Paul, which transported him from cities to countries and from countries to cities, that he might preach to men who had never heard of the Saviour of sinners? How few are the heralds of the gospel, who may be considered like "Barnabas, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost?" When he preached under this influence, much people was added unto the Lord. What a noble testimony is given to the familiar conversations and preaching of

Jesus Christ, in these words, "The common people heard him gladly!" He did not preach to them abstruse metaphysics, nor the vain principles of human philosophy with which some preachers amuse their hearers. No! he delivered to them the truths of God with great plainness, and with a dignity which arrested the conscience, and reached the heart. Paul says, "Take heed lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." There is nothing in revealed religion which is contrary to the principles of sound philosophy: but when worldly wise men substitute a false standard, and call it by this name, we must judge of the soundness of their principles by the test which the Scriptures afford us. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The most glorious manifestation of the

Spirit of God is seen in Jesus Christ. When Peter preached at the house of Cornelius to the Gentiles there assembled, he began his discourse by stating that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." This anointing was typified in the old dispensation by the anointing, which prophets and kings received at their inauguration. When Jesus commenced his ministry, he announced it in the temple by reading to the people his commission, as recorded by the prophet Isaiah thus ; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek : he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound : to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto

them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." After reading this passage, he said to the people, " This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." We have often wished while reading this account, that Luke had given us the discourse which the Lord then delivered. No doubt it was a sermon full of grace and truth.

A happy portion of this anointing by the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly communicated to every qualified minister of the gospel ; and it is their duty to be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, as was Barnabas of old. In order to obtain large portions of this Spirit, they must be men of prayer, having intimate communion

with God. Every Christian ought to be deeply engaged in seeking his guidance, "whom God hath given to them that obey him." Our Lord has commanded us to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. The heart, sinfully inclined to start aside like the deceitful bow, must be guarded with the greatest diligence. Satan, the arch-deceiver, is ever ready to ensnare us by his wiles, that he may destroy our souls, and for this purpose he will employ the world with all its allurements to urge our passage on the broad road to ruin.

Christians, is it your earnest desire to see the continuance and the progress of true religion? Behold the arm of your strength, the power of the Spirit of God. You are assured by the Saviour of sinners, that God is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him, than earthly parents are to give good things to their children. It is his power that

awakens the conscience of the careless, causing them to apprehend the perdition, which awaits their perseverance in sin. The same power leads the penitent to the cross of Christ, and the same energy enables the believer to persevere unto life eternal. Seek this influence continually, and with all the heart, and you will know the nature of the blessedness of the heavenly world. If ye be spiritually minded, ye shall have life and peace. Your souls will mount as on eagles' wings, and with good old Simeon, each of you will be ready to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

CHAPTER IX.

NO RELIGION WITHOUT LOVE.

I. John iv. 7.

BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER : FOR LOVE
IS OF GOD ; AND EVERY ONE THAT LOVETH IS
BORN OF GOD AND KNOWETH GOD.

REVIVALS of religion and practical godliness are the glory of the church, and the safety of the world. They are the glory of the church, because they furnish evident tokens of the presence of the Holy Spirit in his awakening and renewing operations on the minds and hearts of sinners. These gracious influences were promised by the Saviour, a short time before his crucifixion. When he was about to withdraw his visible presence from his dis-

ciples, he kindly assured them, that he would not leave them comfortless, but would send them another Comforter who should abide with them forever, and bring to their remembrance all things, which he had said to them. He had commanded them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, till he should endue them with power from on high. On the day of Pentecost he gave them the most satisfactory assurance, that he was in heaven on his throne of grace, by fulfilling his promise that he would send them his Holy Spirit, whose sacred influence qualified them to preach the gospel with holy energy. Three thousand were converted under the first sermon which Peter preached, and the same power attended the missions of his twelve apostles, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by signs following. We repeat, that revivals of true religion are the glory of the church, on account of their happy effects. They increase the felicity of

all who partake of their influence, because every individual Christian is a partaker of the fruits of the Spirit in the new and gracious exercises, with which his heart and mind are imbued. One of these graces is named in the passage on which we comment, called love. Undoubtedly the apostle John meant holy love, because God is its author, and it is said to be a peculiar property of his holy nature. It is not possible, that any affection of which the human soul is susceptible, can impart more felicity to an individual, than the holy love of which John speaks. He was himself a remarkable example of the loveliness of this affection, as it was a most distinguishing trait of his own character. He is called by way of eminence, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and whom he permitted to lean on his breast in his last supper with his disciples. Our text assures us, that every one who loveth in the sense of which we speak is born of God ; that is, he is

brought by regeneration into a likeness with the God of love ; and this individual is said to know God. Of the unregenerate it is said, that they know not God, having no clear perception of the purity and loveliness of his nature. How clearly does this ratify the truth which Jesus taught Nicodemus ; “ Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, appeared not to understand the truth which the Saviour taught him ; but he was told that a natural birth was not spoken of, but a being born of the Spirit of God. Were the holy love of which we speak to be the ruling principle in the heart of every professing Christian, would not the world in which we live be a delightful resemblance of the heaven in which God displays his glory ? If the full influence of true religion is calculated thus to transform this mundane sphere, how incessant should be the prayers of the children of God, that revi-

vals of genuine piety may extend their felicitous influence over the whole earth ! Nothing under the whole heaven could more fully display the moral character of God, than the manifestation of this religion in its holy tendency on the hearts and in the lives of men.

We assert, that this religion is the safety of the world. What was the cause of the destruction of the old world ? Was it not, because all flesh had corrupted its way before God ? Why were Sodom and Gomorrah visited with the rain of fire and brimstone, burying the cities and their inhabitants in a fearful destruction by the hand of God ? When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jehovah assured him that ten righteous men should be its salvation, if they were to be found in the city. They were not found, and perdition was the result. How fearful was the visitation of wrath, which befel the Jews of Jeru-

saalem for their rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God ! In the short space of forty years after this event, when the people were assembled in large numbers to commemorate the feast of the passover, the Roman army besieged Jerusalem with great force, and confined the Jews within its limits. Josephus estimates the multitude that perished, to have been not less than one million one hundred thousand, destroyed by the sword, famine, and pestilence. Had they accepted the counsel of the Redeemer to repent and humble themselves before God, their desolation might have been averted. In the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah, when the wickedness of the people had subjected them to fearful punishments as a nation, their supplications and penitence were accepted, and their safety and peace conferred.

To return to the consideration of our text, that love is of God, we mention an example

of this as given in the words of our Saviour, "That God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." How affecting is the thought, that he who was himself to be the sacrifice for sin should publish the truth, that he was to be the victim ! Who shall henceforth deny the fact, that love is of God ! Cold unbelieving philosophy would persuade us, that God is infinitely exalted above the influence of so attractive and tender a passion. We, however, deny the speculation, and believe the fact as Jesus has revealed it. Love is of God, as he is the author of this holy passion in the hearts of men ; and as its exercise constitutes a large portion of the happiness of every believer, we desire to see the multiplication of those revivals, by which this holy affection shall diffuse its blessedness throughout the world. The writer recollects, that in a brief conversation

which he held some years since with a beloved minister of the gospel, the Rev. John Pitman, for some time pastor of the Baptist church in Rehoboth, reference was had to the desolations of our country in the revolutionary war. Mr. Pitman remarked, that some of his religious friends were in great fear that our enemies would overcome us, and subject our nation to the tyranny of Britain. At that period, great revivals were occurring in different portions of our States, and he took occasion to observe to them, that he could not sympathize with their apprehensions, because God was then giving us such wonderful manifestations of his favor.

A speedy cessation of the war and England's acknowledgment of our independence, confirmed the correctness of his remark.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE.

II. Chronicles vi. 18.

BUT WILL GOD IN VERY DEED DWELL WITH MEN
ON THE EARTH ?

THIS question, so highly interesting to the happiness of the world, can be answered in the affirmative. Revelation confirms the fact in numerous instances, as well as the knowledge of many happy souls in the present day. God himself has told us by the prophet Isaiah, that he dwells in the humble heart, to revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite ones. From creation to the present time, this truth has been well established, that God has manifested his favorable presence to

the hearts of all his friends. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was an illustrious example of the blessedness, which God can communicate to the human soul. It is said of him, as an illustration of his familiar communion with his Creator, that he walked with God. So eminent was his piety, that he was translated immediately to the heavenly world, that he should not see death. Elijah had a similar translation in a chariot of fire.

We often speak of the first ages of the world, as if they were peculiar for the darkness of that dispensation. In many respects, indeed, those ages were dark, because the peculiar light of the gospel had not arisen with clearness. But in no later day have there been more striking examples of intimate communion between God and men, than was enjoyed in the first ages. It is said of Moses, that "He spake with God face to face, as a man talketh with his friend." What intimacy

must he have had with his Creator, when he was with him forty days in the holy mount ! He was most undoubtedly strengthened in a very peculiar manner in order to enjoy the presence of God on Mount Sinai, and to receive on tables of stone the ten commandments from the hand of God. When he descended from the mountain, there was a glory in his countenance, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold his face, which he therefore veiled, that he might the more familiarly speak to the people.

The communications which God made to Abraham and to Jacob in visions of his glory, were peculiar manifestations of intimacy unknown in the present age. The visions of Isaiah and of Daniel were undoubtedly seasons of great solemnity and delight to them, because they saw the rising glory with which the Son of God would shine upon the dark world in the gospel day. The discoveries

which were made to their minds, were probably at very distant intervals. But the light of the gospel day in which we live, seems to be constant and unremitting. Paul says, "We use great plainness of speech ; and not as Moses, who put a veil on his face, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end or meaning of the dispensation under which they lived, which was to be abolished."

Happy are they, who, in the light of the revivals of religion which are now prevalent, believingly apprehend the glory with which God communicates the truth, and the grace of the gospel to their hearts. From happy experience they know, that God in very deed dwells with men on the earth. Why should not such persons enjoy a life of constant blessedness in holy communion with God ?

The Christian, who thus lives in constant intimacy and holy communion with God, may

appropriate to himself the following language of an enlightened and devoted poet ;

“ My name is printed on his breast,
His book of Life contains my name,
I'd rather have it there impressed
Than in the bright records of fame.

When the last fire burns all things here,
Those letters shall securely stand,
And in the Lamb's fair book appear,
Writ by the Eternal Father's hand.

Paul to the Romans says, “ To be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples, assuring them that when his bodily presence should be withdrawn, he would send them another comforter, the Holy Ghost, who should abide with them forever. This was a promise made through them to believers in all ages. On another occasion he said to them, “ If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will

love him, and we will come unto him and abide with him." How great then is the obligation which rests upon Christians, to glorify God in their body and spirit which are his ! How shall this great work be accomplished, but by a diligent keeping of the heart ? The command of Christ is, " Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

The first gracious exercises of a believer on his conversion, are peculiarly cheering to his heart, and in the fulness of his joy he is ready to imagine, that he is prepared to wing his way to the kingdom of glory. His heavenly Father, however, has a great work for him to do ; it is this, to show forth the praises of Him, who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. Grace is not given him merely for his own happiness, but he is to endeavor to be a light in the world, and to be the instrument in the conversion of others. He is to show the excellence of religion by a

graceful temper and an amiable deportment. And why should he not do this? Believers in Jesus, “ See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time ;” doing with the whole heart what your hands find to do.

Revivals of vital and practical godliness afford indubitable evidence of the presence of Christ with his saints, and give a reply to the question in our text, that God does in very deed dwell with men on the earth. All who believe in Christ, and experience the renewing grace and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, have the promise of eternal life. But the superficial Antinomian, who rests his confidence in the vain hope of a personal election of which he has no evidence ; and the proud moralist, who trusts to his regular conduct, or to his charities to the poor, or his imaginary goodness, and the Universalist, whose sole hope is in the false theory that all will be sav-

ed ; each of these will find unless he repents, when death shall disrobe him of his mortality of flesh, that his soul is lost.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

Matthew xxvii. 51.

THE VAIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS RENT IN TWAIN,
FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM.

THIS remarkable event took place at the hour of the crucifixion of Christ, and is full of meaning, prefiguring the abrogation of the rites and ceremonies under the Mosaic dispensation. This vail, which separated the holy of holies from the entrance of all persons except the Jewish high priest, is said to have been 60 feet in height and 30 feet in breadth, its thickness being four inches, or a hand breadth. Other events occurred at the same time, as the rending of rocks, an earthquake,

and a remarkable darkness which continued three hours. Never did a guilty world witness such a scene of wonders as occurred, when Jesus gave up the ghost on the cross. Dr. Young, remarking on this event, has the following lines—

“ The sun beheld it ! No !

The shocking scene drove back his chariot,
Midnight veiled his face ! Not such as nature makes,
A midnight nature shuddered to behold !”

This rending of the vail of the temple was designed, to introduce in more fullness and glory the gospel of the Son of God. There was henceforth no more necessity for the ministrations of the high priest under the Levitical law. The Holy of Holies, into which the high priest entered but once every year to make typical atonement for the sins of the nation, was now laid open to the Jewish people and to all nations. Jesus Christ, the glorious High Priest under the new dispensation

of the gospel, being now visibly offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men, is henceforth to be preached to all nations as the way of access into heaven, of which the Holy of Holies was the type. The resurrection of Jesus, which took place on the third day, not only caused the hearts of his disciples greatly to rejoice, but gave them great liberty in preaching salvation in his name.

After his resurrection, the Saviour met his disciples on various occasions, giving them the clearest manifestations of his victory over death, and the grave, and the powers of darkness. He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem, till they should be endued with power from on high. He had previously intimated to them, that when his bodily presence should be withdrawn, he would send them another Comforter, the Holy Ghost, who should abide with them for ever, and bring to remembrance

the truths which he had taught them during his ministry.

On the day of Pentecost, the first revival of religion that took place after his ascension, he gave them the fullest manifestations, that he had ascended to his throne in the Heaven of heavens. When they had met together at Jerusalem at the time appointed, the Holy Spirit was given in abundant measure, so that they spake with tongues, and glorified God. Under the sermon which Peter preached on this occasion, in which he charged upon the Jews the murder of the Saviour with wicked hands, many of them were convinced of their sin, uttering this most momentous inquiry, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? The gospel by Peter's mouth gave a ready answer, Repent and be converted, and ye shall receive the remission of sins. Three thousand immediately obeyed the command, believing on the Lord Jesus, and were bap-

tized, and the same day were added to the believing friends of Jesus. From that time the grand subject of their preaching was, Jesus and the resurrection, and they were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost, performing wonders in the name of their risen and ascended Lord.

Christians of every name, friends of genuine revivals, as ye desire the continuance of these gracious seasons, and their prevalence through the whole earth, be much in prayer for the copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The vail of the temple is rent in twain, and ye may have free access to the throne of grace. Pray ye to the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth *laborers* into his harvest, men like Paul and Barnabas, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, men willing to work in the cause of God and truth. Evangelists are needed not only for the cause of missions in distant countries, not only for the destitute parts of

our own United States, but also to sound the trumpet of the gospel in our populous cities, to wake up the sleepers in our churches. Do we not recollect the portion of Scripture, which says, that while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat? Do we not see in our cities the prevalence of Popery, powerfully working in the plausibilities of Puseyism? Other soul-destroying errors are infusing poison in the churches, and vice is prevalent in the higher circles under the names of *fashionable life*, and *polite amusements*.

Sinners of every character, awake to the salvation of your souls! The vail of the temple is rent in twain, and the kingdom of heaven is open before you. Ye are commanded to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and to enter this kingdom by believing in Jesus. Listen to what he says to you, "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no

man can shut.” “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” If ye bow your wills to this sovereign mandate, you will obtain immortal glory. The great High Priest of the new dispensation, having offered himself a sacrifice for sin, now presents in heaven the blood of atonement shed for sinners, and pleads its efficacy for the full salvation of every penitent, believing sinner.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LATTER DAY GLORY OF THE CHURCH.

Revelation xiv. 6.

I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL FLY IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN, HAVING THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL TO PREACH UNTO THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH, AND TO EVERY NATION, AND KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, FEAR GOD AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM.

It is not our intention to present the entire scope and meaning of this passage. The book from which we copy the declaration, we suppose to be a prophecy of what shall come to pass in the latter-day glory of the church. It has been too much the mistake of commentators on Bible predictions, that they have

been in too great haste to understand the import of the things foretold, and that they have endeavored to inform us the particulars of what God had determined to conceal till near the time when events were to develop the import of what he had but partially revealed to his prophets and apostles. In this book of Revelation, angels are repeatedly mentioned, who must be considered as the ministers of the gospel. The angels of the seven churches of Asia are confessedly the ministers of those churches. Perhaps the angel here named, whose flight is through the midst of heaven, designates the ministers of God who are to be employed in publishing the gospel through our guilty world ; and it is not improbable that the effects of revivals of religion which have occurred and are now occurring, are intimations of the manner in which the news of salvation are to be spread abroad in the languages of all nations. The most remarkable events which

have occurred in the church from creation to the present time, have been effected by revivals. Whenever it has been the pleasure of the God of providence to send great prosperity to his people, he has done it by reviving the hearts of his children, and raising them up to destroy idolatry and wickedness by the prevalence and establishment of his worship, and by the sudden overthrow and destruction of his incorrigible enemies. It was thus when he destroyed Pharaoh and his host in their persecution of Israel ; and in the song of inspiration which was dictated to the mouth of Deborah and Barak, it was sung, “ The Lord has triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

God is the source and centre of all the blessedness of the heavenly world. It is the display of his perfections which fills with delight the holy angels, and the multitude of the spirits of just men made perfect. The noble

company of the redeemed bow in happy adoration before the Lamb in the midst of the throne, saying "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred and nation, and thou art worthy to receive honor and glory and power forever and ever." When the sister of Lazarus went to his grave with Jesus, and the Lord commanded that the stone should be taken away from the tomb, a moment of unbelief seemed to take possession of her heart. She said to the Lord, as if she supposed that he had made some mistake in his order, Lord by this time putrefaction has commenced its ravages on the lifeless body. The Saviour gave her this gentle rebuke, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" When Lazarus came forth she saw the glory which Jesus promised. In what way can we imagine, from the moral state of the world, that it is to be renovated, more impressively

than by revivals of religion? The gospel is God's appointed method for the conversion of the human family, and we have the greatest reason to believe, that it is by the publication of the way by which sinners are to be saved, that he will renew the face of the earth.

What encouragement is now afforded to the friends of truth by the gracious influence, which is at this time shed abroad in our cities and towns! They may lift up their heads with joy, and say, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for him and he will save us."

The dispensation under which we live is denominated by Paul, the *ministration of the Spirit*. The old dispensation is called the ministration of condemnation; but how much more shall ours be called that of mercy! We are not commanded to approach the Lord with tedious rites and ceremonies and bloody sacrifices of beasts; but we are invited to come with humble boldness to the throne of grace,

and with penitence and faith to implore and expect the forgiveness of all our sins in the name of Jesus. The Holy Ghost has promised to answer the petitions of the saints, and we are exhorted to ask in faith that our joy may be full.

O ye believers in God, ye lovers of the Saviour, ye who trust in the energy and grace of the Holy Ghost, come to the Lord as he has commanded you, and supplicate with holy earnestness the abundant showers of his grace, that revivals may continue to bless the world, till the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Do we not know, that on a certain occasion Jesus spake a parable to this end, that "men ought always to pray and not to faint?" It is the persevering, fervent prayer of faith in the name of Jesus, that will bring down to the church on earth the richest blessings.

What is more clearly revealed in the Scrip-

ture, than this truth, that there is a holy intercourse between heaven and earth? Much of this intercourse is carried on by prayer, and secret communion with God. The Rev. Dr. Baldwin used to say in seasons of revival, that it was easy preaching when Christians were praying. During his ministry of more than thirty years with the Second Baptist Church in this city, several precious revivals occurred, in which he and the venerated Stillman labored with much success. The most remarkable one took place in 1804 and 1805. It is here mentioned with pleasure, that the Rev. Dr. Eckley, then pastor of the Old South Church, frequently engaged with these ministers in the meetings during that revival. Happy would it be for Boston, if all the churches now felt the same gracious influence which pervaded that season.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CROWNING EVIDENCE OF SALVATION.

Matthew x. 22.

HE THAT ENDURETH TO THE END SHALL BE
SAVED.

THESE words of the Lord Jesus were spoken to his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel, and they contain the gracious promise of eternal life to every disciple that shall persevere in obeying his gospel to the end of life. He candidly stated to them the persecutions and trials to which they would be subjected in preaching repentance to guilty men. He assured them, however, of his constant presence and support in all the difficulties, which they should encoun-

ter, and commanded them not to fear the wrath of their enemies, but to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. How rich are the promises, which Jesus makes to those who persevere in his service to the end of life, overcoming the snares of the world and wiles of Satan. Let us recur to some of these promises.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my

God : and I will write upon him my new name. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” What a fullness of immortal blessedness is contained in these gracious declarations of the Redeemer, to encourage us to be faithful in our obedience to him ? Besides these gracious assurances, every humble believer has the promise of the constant aid, and grace of the Holy Spirit.

How noble are the motives, which should influence the Christian to endure with patience all the trials, which may be for him in consequence of his love to the Redeemer of his soul. Well might an apostle say, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” In the exercise of holy gratitude, the redeemed sinner cannot fail to devote all the powers of his soul in the service of his Lord.

The glory of God is intimately connected with our perseverance in the way of holiness.

“ Herein,” said Jesus, “ is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Believers are commanded to let their light shine before the world, that ungodly men may see the influence of religion in their holy practice. What a lovely exhibition of grace, is the circumspect behavior of an humble saint? The rapid progress of such an one in the life of faith, cannot fail to stimulate his brethren to imitate his bright example. While thus advancing homeward, he will seem to present a specimen of the purity of heaven’s glory. His own felicity will increase with his growth in grace, and he will anticipate the rapture that Paul expressed, when he said, he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, than all which he could enjoy while in a world of sin.

Those who on their first conversion, apprehend something of the glory which awaits them at death, sometimes appear almost im-

patient in being detained on earth ; but they should recollect, that God requires them to exhibit the loveliness of religion before a sinful world ; and if their stay on earth must be protracted to the weariness of four score years, it will continue to be their duty to bring forth fruit. The promise is to him that endureth to the end, and in proportion to the faithfulness of his endurance, will be his crown of glory in the heavenly world.

Children of the living God, ye to whom he has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, enabling you to call him your Father, strive to live as in the suburbs of heaven, anticipating while on earth the joys of the heavenly world. Recollect that the felicities of your religion are not confined to any locality. Do ye imagine, that Paul and Silas were less happy for being thrust into the inner prison of the jail at Philippi? They had there the presence of God, and when they prayed and

sang his praises, a sudden earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, manifesting that these men were the friends of God. How futile are the most cunning stratagems of his enemies? God had a great purpose to accomplish at Philippi, and nothing could retard it. If an earthquake is necessary, and the bands of the prisoners are to be loosed, we behold the work accomplished! Though the jailor was charged to keep the prisoners safely, Paul and Silas are released from the prison, in which their feet were made fast in stocks, and are brought forth by the providence of God to preach the gospel, and baptize the astonished keeper of the prison and his household, these new trophies of victorious grace. The stripes of the prisoners are washed by the penitent jailer, and they, with the new born converts, rejoice together, believing in God. Here we see an illustration of Milton's remark, that the soul may be happy in any

place, if it be reconciled to God, or wretched, if his enemy. This eloquent bard thus expressed the idea,

“ The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven,
No matter where, if I be still the same.”

Though the three Jewish worthies were in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the den of lions, or Paul a prisoner at Rome, or the beloved apostle John in his banishment on the Isle of Patmos, they were all more happy in their suffering and degradation, than the monarchs, their oppressors, though dwelling in palaces and seated on thrones of power. The former had the presence of God in their seasons of trial, while the latter perhaps were smarting under the lashes of their guilty consciences.

Perseverance in the path of duty, or endurance to the end of life, has the promise of the highest reward which can be desired by the true believer. Jesus thus presents it to our view:

“If a man love me, he will keep my commandments, and my father will love him, and we will come to him and take up our abode with him.” “If any man serve me, him will my father honor.” The honor here spoken of is the approbation of the Deity, and the certainty of his favor in a long eternity. This will include the highest blessedness of which the human soul is capable, and the endless society of all the friends of God. In the contemplation of this fullness of joy, justly has Dr. Young said,

“A perpetuity of bliss is bliss.”

Rev. William Jay, of England in representing the happiness of the believer as unaffected by the adverse changes of earth, thus observes, “the Christian may stand on the ashes of the Universe and exclaim, I have lost nothing.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BELIEVER'S PROSPECT IN DEATH.

II. Corinthians v. 8.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER
TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE
PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

JESUS CHRIST by his advent to the earth has opened to our view the invisible world. In his own person he has shown to us the patience with which all the ills of life may be endured, and the dignity and condescension with which all the commandments of God may be obeyed in perfection, having in view the honor of God, and of his government, and the salvation of every penitent and believing soul. In his life and death he has shown us the high

claims, and the reasonableness of the law of God.

Through his intervention as our Redeemer, he has revealed to us the way in which God may be just in our salvation. Through his grace the Holy Spirit is sent forth to renew and sanctify the souls of men, communicating to them the grace which inspires their souls with the hope and expectation of eternal glory. It was in this confident hope that the apostle said in behalf of himself and his believing brethren, "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven." What this house from heaven is, of which the apostle speaks, we can have no adequate conception while in the body, but it is undoubtedly a representation of unspeakable felicity.

When Jesus was about to ascend from earth to heaven, he spake thus in relation to this subject ; “ In my father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” We need not be troubled in relation to the exact character of the mansions spoken of ; for undoubtedly a fullness of blessedness is meant. The beloved John has remarked ; “ It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” To be like Jesus and to see him as he is, beholding the fullness of his glory is a blessedness not to be expressed, or adequately conceived of in the present state. Suffice it to say, it will satisfy the holy soul.

With what ardent desire have the saints in all ages panted for this felicity ! Venerable

Jacob exclaimed, when in the pangs of expiring nature, "I wait for thy salvation." His holy soul panted for the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Jacob's life protracted to one hundred and forty seven years was a chequered scene, a journey of weariness. When introduced to Pharaoh by Joseph, the monarch inquired of him his age. He replied "the days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." Here the patriarch introduced to Pharaoh the nature of his religion, and that his life, like that of his ancestors, was a pilgrimage to a heaven of holiness. David also, in expressing his disappointment in pursuing all the gratifications of the present life, looks forward with pleasing anticipation to a world of blessedness, and thus utters his hope of per-

fection in the future state : “ As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.” Nothing inferior to this can possibly satisfy the desires of an immortal mind.

Confident prospects and similar feelings are expressed by New Testament saints. Paul, when near to the day of his martyrdom, thus observes, “ I am ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.” This crown, the approbation of his Redeemer was all that he desired ; but he did not consider it as any thing which he had merited, but as the bountiful gift of his Saviour. Peter, who was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, confidently speaks of himself as “ also a partaker of the glory, that shall be

revealed." He had seen Jesus in his deepest humiliation, and when in an agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and he had the assurance that he should see him on his throne in heaven, where he would receive from angelic hosts and the multitude of the redeemed, the worship due to him as the self-existent God, the co-equal and co-eternal Son of the everlasting Father.

In what strains of heavenly eloquence does this apostle celebrate the dignity of Jesus! "We have not" said he, "followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy

mount.” Perhaps there was never on earth a brighter display of the glory of Christ, than at the season alluded to. Peter, James, and John heard the conversation which Moses and Elias held with Jesus, when he spake of his decease. The magnificence of the display of his glory overpowered the senses of his disciples, so that they became heavy with sleep. It was to them such a discovery of the glory of Christ as the Son of God, that its remembrance must have filled their souls with unspeakable delight.

Peter, in exhorting his ministering brethren to be faithful, considers them and himself as shepherds, watching over the flock of God, and invites them to persevere in the discharge of their duty with the assurance, that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. This prospect of eternal blessedness is the privilege of all believers, and its brightness

will become more and more the delight of their souls, as they advance in faith and holiness.

Let them not faint in the pursuit of the purity, for which they thirst. God may see it necessary to purify their hearts with greater afflictions, before they arrive at the end of their journey ; but let them remember the comfortable assurance, which is couched in the beautiful distich of Pomfret :

“ Heaven is not always angry when he strikes,
But oft chastises those whom most he likes.”

Let them bear in mind the consolations which is embodied in our Scripture at the head of this article, “ absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” It is indeed true, that a painful struggle may be endured in the dissolution of the body ; the sentence was passed upon the race at the commission of the first transgression which

“ Brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

Body and Soul have long been connected in the closest intimacy, and the thought of their separation very naturally excites a feeling of dread. The reflection that the tabernacle in which the soul has so long dwelt, and which we have cherished with the fondest care, is to return to its primitive dust, becomes repulsive. But all these feelings may be counteracted and overcome by the hope which religion inspires.

The apostle has told us, “the body is dead because of sin ;” the sentence was passed upon our whole race “dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” But the believer has an immortal life in the world of glory, and God has kindly permitted him in the article of death assuredly to expect his beatification. The anticipations of this fulness of glory should at all times cheer his heart in his most painful trials.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHRISTIAN IN HEAVEN.

I. Corinthians ii. 9, 10.

EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NEITHER
HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN,
THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED FOR
THEM THAT LOVE HIM. BUT GOD HATH RE-
VEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT; FOR
THE SPIRIT SEARCHETH ALL THINGS, YEA,
THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.

THE leading idea embodied in this passage and the accompanying verses, is this, that there is a state of perfect felicity for the friends of God in the invisible world, something of the nature of which is revealed to them by the Spirit of God in their regeneration, and by those heavenly communications which the

same Spirit may afterwards make to them in their communion with Him. The unregenerate or natural man has no idea of the spirituality of that religion, which God makes known to the real Christian. The truths spoken of are called the things of God; and as no man knows the things of a man or his secret thoughts save the spirit of man which is in him, so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. The apostle then proceeds to illustrate, how it is that a believer becomes acquainted with that religion, which is spiritual and divine. Now, says he, we believers, have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. This draws the line of demarkation between the friends of God and his enemies.

It is an opinion entirely contradictory to the Scriptures, that the soul with the body will

be in an unconscious state until the resurrection. Jesus said to the Jews, "Now that the dead are raised" or that there is a future life, "even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Thus he distinctly showed, that the souls of the saints now live with God in Heaven. This prospect of immediate blessedness at death is a grand motive for persevering obedience to the end of life, and should be a constant stimulus to preparation for the enjoyment of God in Heaven. This immortal hope should sustain the Christian in the endurance of the sharpest sufferings, to which he may be called for the honor of his Saviour.

The spiritual knowledge of true religion on earth, constitutes a preparation for Heaven. All the inhabitants of that world are prepared for intercourse with the God of Glory, and at

death the Christian will be divested of all imperfection and sin, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He will have the most intimate fellowship with angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect. He will see and converse with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. He will hear from the noble company of Martyrs, the story of their sufferings in the cause of their Redeemer; and he will learn from apostles and confessors the supports and comforts, which they enjoyed in their work of faith and patience of hope, while on their pilgrimage to the heavenly world. With all these they will unite in giving praise to Jesus in that endless song of worship, "unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us unto our God kings and priests, to him be glory and honor forever and ever."

What an amazing transition is that, which

the saint experiences at death ! If we view him as a martyr burning at the stake, or crucified as was the Lord of Glory, or on the bed of death, suffering the pangs of dissolving nature, in either of these situations he will pass in a moment into the presence of his God and Saviour ! These are not the rhapsodies of enthusiasm, the vagaries of a heated imagination, but facts, which have constantly occurred from the death of Abel to the present time. Shall we not cease to wonder at the felicities of Heaven, when we reflect upon the character of its inhabitants, and the glory of that Almighty Being, who is continually diffusing his own blessedness through the souls of the adoring millions, who worship before Him.

The sublimity of His moral perfections will be an inexhaustible source of contemplation and joy in the endless ages of eternity. Though the mightiest minds which shall ever exist, will be continually endeavoring to fa-

thom and comprehend his moral excellence, He will forever remain the incomprehensible Jehovah. What an illimitable source of joy will be the contemplations of the holy throng in Heaven in their admiration of the infinite Being, who fills immensity ! How will they delight to meditate upon the glories of his justice and the wonders of His love ! Most of all will they see God in Christ, Him who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. Shall we be surprised at the greatest endurance of suffering, which the saints have experienced in the present life, when we consider the expectations of immortal glory, with which their faith and love inspire them ? How should the same prospects and the same faith animate the living, to pursue the path towards eternal life ! How should our hearts rise in holy gratitude and praise to God, who has set before us such motives to seek his approbation ? Do we not

clearly discern, how duty and happiness are intimately conjoined? Our constant pursuit of them will bring down Heaven to Earth.

From the contemplations in which we have indulged, we learn the value of the immortal soul. We learn its worth in the price which was paid for its redemption, in the sufferings and death of Jesus. But the value of the soul is most vividly delineated in the language of another, and we accordingly close our article with an impressive extract from the writings of that great and good man, the late Robert Hall.

“ We are made for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; it is our high calling and destination; and not to pursue it with diligence, is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and in consequence of neglecting the great

salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express, nor finite minds formed to grasp. Eternity invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared to which all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object, it is easy to exceed the proper estimate. But what would be the funeral obsequies of the lost soul? Where shall we find tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle; or could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourn-

ing, and the heavens with sackcloth ; or were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe !”



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